NCA
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MALLORY SALESON/MUNICH

BERLIN BLOCKADE ANNIVERSARY

ANNCR:

JUNE TWENTY-FOURTH MARKS THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BERLIN BLOCKADE -- THE FIRST MAJOR CONFRONTATION OF THE COLD WAR. VOA'S MALLORY SALESON HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

THIRTY YEARS AFTER THE SOVIET BLOCKADE OF WEST BERLIN, THE DIVIDED CITY -- SITUATED ONE HUNDRED SIXTY KILOMETERS INSIDE EAST GERMANY -- REMAINS A BONE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. THE BLOCKADE -- WHICH CUT OFF ALL LAND ACCESS TO WEST BERLIN -- WAS SEEN AS A SOVIET ATTEMPT TO EITHER FORCE THE WESTERN POWERS OUT OF BERLIN, OR AT LEAST TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO GIVE UP THEIR PLAN FOR USING A NEW WEST GERMAN STATE AS AN ALLY AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION.

THE SUBSEQUENT AMERICAN-LED AIRLIFT SUCCESSFULLY DELIVERED THOUSANDS OF TONS OF SUPPLIES TO WEST BERLIN PER DAY. IT ENDED ELEVEN MONTHS LATER, IN MAY NINETEEN FORTY-NINE, WHEN THE SOVIET UNION AGREED TO LIFE THE BLOCKADE.

BUT THIS WAS NOT TO BE THE LAST CONFRONTATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IN WHICH BERLIN WOULD BECOME A FOOCAL POINT AND SYMBOL. AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WEST GERMAN STATE IN SEPTEMBER NINETEEN FORTY-NINE, THE SITUATION IN BERLIN DEVELOPED INTO AN EPIC OF NERVES THROUGHOUT THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES.

IN NINETEEN SIXTY-ONE, EAST GERMANY BUILT A WALL BETWEEN THE WESTERN AND EASTERN SECTORS OF THE CITY TO PREVENT EAST GERMANS FROM ESCAPING TO THE WEST. FINALLY, IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-ONE, THE FOUR POWERS WHICH CONTROLLED BERLIN -- THE U.S., FRANCE,

BRITAIN AND THE SOVIET UNION -- SIGNED THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT. THE AGREEMENT RECOGNIZED WESTERN ACCESS RIGHTS TO THE CITY.

THE QUESTION OF BERLIN HAD TO BE SETTLED AND PUT ASIDE BEFORE EAST-DETENTE COULD BLOSSOM IN OTHER AREAS. AS VICE-PRESIDENT MONDALE NOTED LAST YEAR, EAST AND WEST HAD GONE TO THE BRINK OF WAR MORE THAN ONCE IN THE PAST THIRTY YEARS OVER TENSIONS FIRST MANIFESTED IN WEST BERLIN. HE POINTED OUT THAT SUCH CONFRONTATION MUST END IN ORDER TO REDUCE TENSIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST.

SOME WESTERN OFFICIALS NOW POINT OUT THAT THE QUADRIPARTITE IS VAGUE AND FULL OF GENERALITIES. UNDER THE AGREEMENT, WEST GERMANY IS ALLOWED TO "MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP" TIES WITH WEST BERLIN, THE PACT ALSO NOTES THAT WEST BERLIN IS NOT A PART OF WEST GERMANY AND CANNOT BE RULED FROM BONN.

AND SO THE DISPUTE OVER THE STATUS OF BERLIN CONTINUES. THIS WAS SEEN MOST RECENTLY DURING SOVIET LEADER LEONID BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO WEST GERMANY. THE SOVITET UNION AGAIN PREVENTED THE INCLUSION OF WEST BERLIN INTO THREE NEGOTIATED BUT UNSIGNED AGREEMENTS WITH THE F-R-G.

THIRTY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE SOVIET BLOCKADE OF WEST BERLIN. AND AS ONE OBSERVER HAS NOTED, THE CITY THAT USED TO BE A STAGE FOR COLD WAR CONFRONTATION IS NOW A "BAROMETER OF DETENTE.

JS/PY